

Melanzane alla Parmigiana

Baked eggplant with tomato, Parmigiano-Reggiano, and mozzarella

Serves 6

4 pounds large eggplants	8 to 10 large fresh basil leaves, finely sliced
1 garlic clove, finely chopped	
4 pounds ripe tomatoes, preferably plum, peeled and chopped	olive oil for cooking
16 ounces buffalo mozzarella cheese	salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, grated	

Cut the eggplants into thick slices. Sprinkle with salt and leave in a colander, preferably overnight, to draw out excess water. Rinse and pat dry with paper towels. Heat enough olive oil for shallow-frying in a pan over medium-high heat and add the eggplant slices in a single layer. Shallow-fry on both sides for a few minutes until the slices start to brown slightly. Make sure that the oil is hot before adding the eggplant to the pan, so that they do not absorb too much oil. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350°F. Make a tomato sauce by heating a little oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook until it is soft and transparent, before adding the tomatoes and basil. Season with salt and pepper. Cook for eight minutes until the tomatoes have broken up and reduced into a pulpy sauce.

As soon as the sauce is ready, arrange alternating layers of eggplant, tomato sauce, mozzarella slices, and Parmigiano-Reggiano in a greased baking dish. Make sure to press down the ingredients well, so that the layers become compacted. Finish off with a layer of sauce and a sprinkling of Parmigiano-Reggiano. Bake in the preheated oven for about forty minutes. Let stand for a few minutes to allow the ingredients to set slightly, then cut into individual portions while still in the dish. Carefully slide out onto serving plates using a spatula, and serve hot.

Recipe by Chef Fabio Trabocchi



Garden Café Italia

Venice: Canaletto and His Rivals

National Gallery of Art, East Building

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Canaletto, *The Piazza San Marco and the Piazzetta, Looking Southeast*, c. 1743.

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